



Press Release

Jaipur, December 2, 2020: On the eve of International Day for Persons with Disabilities and as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women and Girls, a Webinar “Towards a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world was organised by Centre for Advocacy and Research with the support of Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Urban Livelihood Mission, and Prayas.

The Webinar highlighted that persons with disabilities (PwD), were most adversely impacted by the pandemic in three areas: a) Not able to access basic sanitation services, essential for prevention and protection from the pandemic; b) not able to secure social protection schemes for the disabled; c) no financial assistance or alternative livelihood.

Akhila Sivadas, Executive Director, CFAR in her opening remarks, said, “This webinar is the third in the series and today we are here not only to take stock, reflect but also act together to address the present crisis that the disabled living in informal settlements are facing especially in trying to access water, sanitation and hygiene services and facilities”, she added

Asha from Rajeev Nagar highlighted the plight of disabled persons. “If the basic design of the toilet is not made in consultation with us, we will not be able to use it. If the sewer line or water pipeline does not come to our doorstep, we cannot collect water. We collect waste at home for many days as it is difficult to walk long distance daily, we appeal to the government to see our plight and plan our sanitation with us.”

Shiv, who uses his hands to walk and lives with his similarly disabled wife said, “The pandemic has left many disabled persons without jobs and disrupted their small businesses. We can no longer take care of their families and live a life of dignity. There should be some special schemes to reduce our vulnerability.”

Chiranjilal, an elderly from Bapu Basti shared his plight of not being able to get any pension. “I visited the e-Mitra centre but they asked for money which I cannot pay. I get no support and it is not possible for me to visit government offices again and again. If access to schemes can be made easy it will help us to get food and medicines”, he appealed.

Responding to the specific needs of women living with disabilities for home-based livelihood Mr. Navin Bhardwaj, Deputy Commissioner, NULM, Greater shared that a policy directive has been issued for skilling and financial support to women who are willing to become a part of Self-Help Groups. “We will provide them soft loans so that they can work from home, Recently NULM has issued a directive that five disabled people can form an SHG and we will provide them with free skills and marketing support to sell their products. We need support of NGOs to make this happen”.

Dr. Akash Deep Arora, Deputy Director, Rajasthan Administrative Service presented three recommendations which the government departments need to take forward in a consistent

manner. “We must operationalise the Right to PwD Act to enable disabled persons to live with dignity, provide equal opportunities in education and jobs and most of all take steps to remove barriers to empower them to contribute as citizens of this country. And for this we all have to work together for 365 days and not one day of the year.” he said.

Ms Pooja Sharma, Senior Consultant and Disability Expert, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Jaipur, expressed concern on the plight of persons with disability who face many barriers in securing social security benefits. She said, “the government has many schemes but we do not have any data or record of the disabled which reduces the uptake of schemes. We also need to ensure that all departments work in a convergence mode that all aspects related to health, education, welfare and security get addressed,”

Resonating the sentiments, Ms. Indu Rani Singh, Director, Special Projects, from Prayas, an organisation working to empower disabled persons, lamented that information on social security and COVID response relief does not take into account their specific barriers related to citizenship documents needed to access the benefits. Most disabled do not have Aadhar or income certificates or a disability certificate to avail pension and food security benefits. There is a lack of operational planning which leads to patchy delivery. “There should be a task force and committees set up by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment dedicated to services for disabled, with correct data so that access to schemes can be fast tracked” she suggested.

The Webinar was a part of the project, *Water for Women: Mobilizing, Facilitating and Replicating Socially Inclusive WASH Initiatives in India’s Urban Slums*, supported by Water for Women Fund, Government of Australia. It was attended by 65 government officials, development organisations and community representatives

Sixteen days of activism against gender-based Violence

A statement released by Mr António Guterres, UN Secretary-General on the occasion, stated the following, “As the world retreated inside homes due to the lockdown measures introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed an alarming increase in the already existing pandemic of violence against women in different ways.”

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is a global campaign which begins with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25 and culminates on the Human Rights Day on December 10, 2020. On this day, women, men and organisations worldwide to give a clarion call to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination, violence and enable women to exercise their rights as citizens.

International Day of Persons Living with Disabilities-December 3, 2020

According to UNESCO guidelines on persons with disability:

- Persons with disabilities in the world are among the hardest hit by COVID-19
- Of these 46% are older people aged 60 years, one in every ten is a child with disability and one in five a woman
- Of these 80% live in developing countries

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992 by United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3. It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed world- wide, every year on December 3, 2020

About Centre for Advocacy and Research

The Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), a non-profit organization, founded in January 1998, is committed to advancing the rights of a cross-section of marginal communities from a gender and development perspective. We work across 116 districts and 9 cities in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

For more details, please contact -

Krutika Kapil, 8504929626 or Padmini Krishnan, 9810482967